



## **Safe Driving Practices for Employees**

You are your employer's most valuable asset! The way that you drive says everything about you and your company. Make a positive statement by following these work-related safe driving practices.

Thousands of auto accidents take place on our nation's roads and highways each day in the U.S., and the consequences of these collisions can be devastating - both for the unlucky passengers and for innocent bystanders. From minor scrapes to life-threatening trauma or paralysis, injuries resulting from careless or impaired drivers can be emotionally and financially draining.

Auto accidents take a huge toll on the population of America each year. The dependence on the car as the primary mode of transportation means that the numbers of auto accidents will likely increase in the years to come. Americans should not be lulled into the false sense of security that larger vehicles such as light trucks and SUVs provide more protection than smaller cars, for this is rarely the case.

### **Stay Safe**

- Use a seat belt at all times – driver and passenger(s).
- Be well-rested before driving.
- Avoid taking medications that make you drowsy.
- Set a realistic goal for the number of miles that you can drive safely each day.
- If you are impaired by alcohol or any drug, do not drive.

### **Stay Focused**

- Driving requires your full attention. Avoid distractions, such as adjusting the radio or other controls, eating or drinking, and talking on the phone.
- Continually search the roadway to be alert to situations requiring quick action.
- Stop about every two hours for a break. Get out of the vehicle to stretch, take a walk, and get refreshed.

### **Avoid Aggressive Driving**

- Keep your cool in traffic!
- Be patient and courteous to other drivers.
- Do not take other drivers' actions personally.
- Reduce your stress by planning your route ahead of time (bring the maps and directions), allowing plenty of travel time, and avoiding crowded roadways and busy driving times.

For more information on safe driving for work, refer to "Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes" at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/motorvehiclesafety/index.html>.

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## Most Common Automobile Accidents

### Asleep at the Wheel Accident

While intoxicated drivers notoriously leave a wake of carnage behind them, another life-threatening problem on our nation's roads involves drivers who are fatigued and/or sleep deprived. Nearly four percent of deadly crashes nationwide involve sleepy or fatigued drivers, while hundreds are injured every year from drivers who fall asleep at the wheel. Though not intentionally malicious or premeditated, the decision to drive while fatigued - and thus the responsibility for the collision - ultimately belongs to the driver. The victim of the ensuing accident should not have to suffer financially for the negligence of another.

Some startling statistics about sleeping at the wheel:

- 31% of all drivers have fallen asleep at the wheel at least once.
- 100,000 accidents each year are caused by sleeping at the wheel
- 1,500 people die as a result of falling asleep at the wheel
- These accidents cost the American taxpayer \$30 billion each year
- Out of 593 long-distance truck drivers, 47.1% had fallen asleep at the wheel at least once, and 25.4% within the last year.
- 100 million drive while drowsy each year.

### Drunk Driving Accident

Tragically, there are more intoxicated drivers on American roads at a given minute than ever before, resulting in thousands of unnecessary accidents each day. Alcohol related accidents are one of the leading causes of injuries and fatalities on our nation's roads and highways, killing

someone an average of one almost every 30 minutes and injuring a victim nearly every two minutes. When a driver chooses to break the law and operate a vehicle after drinking, he is quite literally choosing to take innocent lives into his own hands - many times with disastrous results.

Some startling drunk driving statistics:

- Of 1,672 motorcyclist fatalities in 2004, 41% had BAC levels of .08 or greater.
- During weekdays in 2004, 30% of all fatal crashes were alcohol-related.
- 51% of all fatal crashes occurred on the weekends in the same time period.
- 80% of alcohol-related fatalities are caused by drinking beer.
- Drunk driving accidents are three times more likely to occur at night than during the day.
- Almost 30% of all Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at one point or another.

### High Speed Collision Accident:

Although a person is injured in a motor vehicle accident every 10 seconds in the United States and someone is killed every 13 minutes, high speed collisions can be especially devastating. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that speeding alone was a contributing factor in almost 30% of all fatal crashes last year. For the innocent survivors of such harrowing accidents, the recovery process - both emotional and physical - can be horribly painful and exorbitantly expensive.

High speed collisions facts:

- High speed plays a role in almost 30% of all fatal collisions that occur each year

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- In 2002, 13,713 people died in speeding-related deaths
  - Driving impaired is linked to speeding deaths. 41% of drivers of involved in speeding accidents had a BAC over .08
  - Saturdays are the most likely days to have a high-speed collision, followed by Sundays and Fridays
  - 40% of all high-speed collisions occur at curves, twice the rate of non-speeding fatalities that occur on a curve (20%)

### **Highway or Freeway Accident:**

As the population explodes and the number of both commercial and recreational vehicles on America's roads and highways increasing - combined with an exponential increase in interstate travel - accidents between automobiles and trucks on our highways and freeways are rising exponentially.

Each year there are more than 42,000 American deaths and almost two million injuries sustained in automobile accidents. Collisions taking place on highways and interstates can be especially catastrophic, and with high driving speeds and increased congestion, these numbers are rising each year.

### **Lane Changing Accident:**

With the substantial increase of drivers and the escalating speed limits on roads and highways in the United States, lane changing accidents have proven to be an increasingly costly hazard for drivers, passengers, and pedestrians alike. Each year there are over 200,000 lane-changing and merging traffic accidents, with over 200 of them resulting in deaths. The lane-changing vehicle may be legally at fault in such an incident, because before a lane change is attempted, the driver has a duty to make sure it is safe to do so.

### **Pedestrian Knockdown Accident:**

Being hit by a moving vehicle can be at the very least terrifying for an innocent pedestrian - and at worst, it can be fatal. Over 110,000 pedestrians are injured every year in this country and nearly 62,000 are killed. School age children and the elderly are the most vulnerable. In fact, over 1/3rd of pedestrian-related accidents happen when children are leaving school and walking home. Many times the collision is caused by a careless driver who ignores traffic signals or overlooks the pedestrian entirely.

### **Rear End Collisions:**

Although a rear end collision is the least fatal type of auto accident, they are the most common incidents on the road today - with approximately 2.5 million occurring each year. The rising use of onroad distractions such as cell phones, Palm Pilots, and Blackberry devices - coupled with the ever-expanding number of young and inexperienced drivers on the road - have contributed to an annual increase in rear end collisions and the injuries stemming from such incidents.

Common external factors of injury in rear end collisions:

- The condition of the road: if the road is wet, icy, or dry it can greatly affect the ability of a person to stop a safe distance away from other vehicles
- The weather: fog, rain, snow, or dust can severely limit visibility, resulting in a number of potential situations that can cause rear end collisions
- Condition of the vehicles: poorly maintained tires are a significant factor in rear end collisions, as they can fail to grip the road properly
- Speed: even slow speed collisions can cause significant injury, although higher speed rear ends are more dramatic

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Common internal factors of injury in rear end collisions:

- Position of passengers: cars are designed to accommodate some of the force of accidents if passengers are sitting in the correct positions, if not they risk significant harm
- Head rests: proper head rest positioning can prevent neck injuries and whiplash
- Seatbelts and airbags: if seatbelts are used properly they can prevent injury and even death in a rear end collision
- Awareness of the crash: people tend to brace themselves if they anticipate a rear end collision. These extra seconds can make a huge difference in the likelihood of an accident

### Side Impact Collision:

Side impact car accident facts:

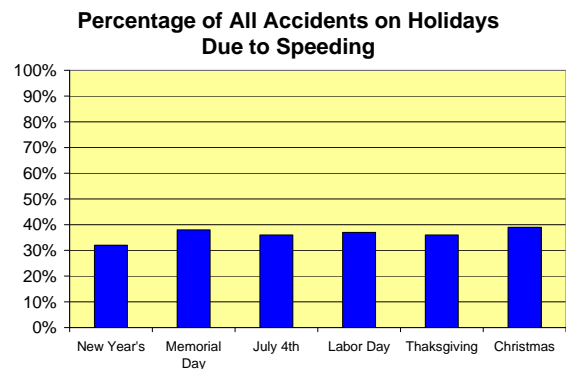
- Side impact collisions are responsible for over 9,000 deaths annually
- Only head-on collisions account for more deaths
- In fact, in 2004, approximately 26% of all fatal auto accidents were from side impact collisions
- 31% of all non-fatal auto accidents were the result of side impact collisions.
- Most of these incidents occur at intersections as the result of a failure to yield at a stop sign or red light, and are thus preventable - you shouldn't have to pay for another driver's negligence.

### Speeding Car Accident:

While auto accidents themselves injure a person in the U.S. every 10 seconds, speeding drivers are the cause of nearly 30% of these collisions, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that speeding alone was a contributing factor in almost one-third of all

fatal crashes last year. The danger of speeding is threefold: First, speed reduces the reaction time drivers need to avoid crashes, which in turn increases the likelihood of crashing and severity of accidents. Secondly, speed increases the distance needed to stop a vehicle. Speeding drivers also may not be able to judge distances as well and could put pedestrians at a greater risk.

Speeding car accident fatalities on Holidays



Facts on Speeding Car Accidents:

- Half of all speeding deaths occur on local low speed roads found around residential and business areas, despite their low speed limits
- Local and collector roads have an almost triple fatality rate as Interstates
- Rural roads are particularly dangerous. 65% of all speeding-related deaths occur on rural roads
- Local rural roads are even more dangerous than urban roads; speeding deaths occur four times more there than elsewhere

**Preventing Traffic Accidents** Most traffic accidents are preventable. Taking simple steps can help prevent an auto accident.

**FACT: Most traffic accidents happen within 2 seconds.**

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Things to avoid doing while behind the wheel:

- Talking on the cell phone.
- Eating while driving.
- Tuning the radio or CD player.
- Putting on make-up.
- Reading a map or book while driving.
- Text messaging.

## Summary

In summary, drivers should be well prepared for operating a vehicle before using roadways. This includes the condition of the driver and vehicle. Operating a vehicle safely requires maturity and concentration. Even seemingly minor errors may have serious effects.